

PASTORS TO PASTORS

Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry
Orthodox Church in America



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Why a newsletter?

Dear brothers,

The purpose of this newsletter will ultimately be defined by you, the reader. Our initial intent is to provide a positive forum for the exchange of ideas relating to the pastoral ministry of the Church. Our focus will be on the ordained ministry — *your* ministry and that of your family. The exchange of ideas is important because it can stimulate thought, excite and foster enthusiasm, promote growth, and hopefully enhance our Orthodox Christian spirituality. What do you think?

The resource material that we draw on could include Holy Tradition, Liturgy, Scripture, personal and pastoral experience, the lives of the Fathers and Mothers of the Church, insights from contemporary behavioral science, etc. In this particular issue of *Pastors to Pastors*, we will provide you with a vision statement which we invite you to comment on, the results of a clergy survey from the Diocese of the West regarding their thoughts on ministry, a letter from a fellow priest, and finally, a personal look at how one priest views the Liturgy.

If this all seems too open ended, it is meant to be. We have no right to tell you how to conduct your ministry, but you can be sure that we are interested in your ideas. Some of our articles will center around problem solving, while others will reflect personal pastoral experience or recall the lives and pastoral advice from Patristics and *Matristics*. In the end, it really comes down to what you, the readers, want to discuss. We may all raise more questions than provide answers, and that is fine because the working out of the Christian life is in God's hands, not ours.

Please, *please*, write us. We promise to respond to your concerns in some forum. We trust in your pastoral judgment and we will call upon your advice if you offer it. Are you willing?

Your brother in Christ,

Fr. John

John Scollard, D. Min., ACSW

Our Vision

"What a joy to be a priest! Yesterday I heard the confessions of an entire family. The children especially were most lovable — two boys of about seven or eight. All the evening I was almost rapt in ecstasy..."

These words, penned by Father Alexander Elchaninov in his diary, are a reflection of his soul, of his very being, of his love for the priestly vocation. They were not intended to serve as a "pious platitude" or some "pie in the sky" notion far removed from the reality of a way of life that is unquestionably demanding, seldom glamorous, and very often frustrating. Father Alexander loved being a priest and was able to transcend the less than pleasant facets of the priestly vocation. He was not a stranger to suffering or to occasional "dryness" in prayer.

"...periods of dryness are entirely normal, and we must bear them patiently and with composure. These periods implant in us the humble realization of our helplessness and compel us to place in God alone all our hope for the revival of our hearts."

"Our love of God is measured by our willingness to accept sufferings and misfortunes and to see in them the hand of God... The purifying force and significance of suffering are immense. Our spiritual growth mostly depends on *how* we bear our sufferings. Courage in the face of them, readiness to accept them — these are the signs of a 'correct' soul. But we must not seek sufferings, nor invent them."

VISION to 2

VISION from 1

As all clergy must do, Father Alexander sought to "cooperate" with "divine grace which heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking." And as we know, my friends, this "cooperation" is a lifelong endeavor.

The "vision statement" recently formulated by the newly reorganized Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry expresses its goals: "Recognizing the demands placed on clergy and their families in parish life and contemporary society, the Synod of Bishops created this Department to focus on assisting parish clergy and their families in the fulfillment of their pastoral calling. The Department invites input regarding both issues and possible avenues for addressing those issues. The concern of this Department is exclusively clergy and their families, including clergy widows."

The initial work of the Department will include the publishing of *Pastors to Pastors*. We invite you to contribute by sharing joys and concerns. We will not be reticent in addressing controversial or sensitive topics, nor will we avoid the use of humor as a beneficial tool in addressing our needs. We also ask your prayers, that our work will be pleasing to God and helpful to our clergy and their families.

With love in Christ,

+ JOB

Bishop of Hartford and New England
Episcopal Moderator of the DPLM

Overcoming the ravages of time!

"If only I had 48 hours in a day..."

We've all said it -- and wished it! Obviously, it is impossible to acquire additional hours -- but we *can* make better use of our time if we *prioritize* and consciously set aside the time we need to strengthen our relationships with God, others, and ourselves.

Here are eight areas of our pastoral lives we need to consider seriously:

- 1. Time with God.** As pastors, we need time to experience God's presence in liturgy, personal prayer, Scripture, and study. Time with God is a priority time which *must* be there. It is not the *amount* of time, but the *quality* of your time that is meaningful.
- 2. Time with our families.** If we are to effectively serve the Body of Christ, then surely the most important parts of that Body are our families. We need to take the time to build ourselves into their lives and to let them build themselves into ours. Set aside special times and dates to be with the family, and consider these times just as important -- if not *more* important -- than any others.
- 3. Time with the Family of God.** Of course, we need to spend ample time in worship and fellowship and in leading in the areas of discipleship and stewardship, both with the entire parish community and with small groups.
- 4. Time for ourselves.** We all need relief from pressures and stress, and we should put aside time *on our calendars* to minister to ourselves. No effective pastor exists without addressing his own needs, both spiritual, physical, social, and mental.
- 5. Time for other people.** There are those with whom we relate over and above our regular pastoral commitments. Neighbors, community members, potential parishioners, and those connected with our wives and children need our attention.
- 6. Time to plan.** While this is often overlooked, planning is important in reviewing progress against goals and making new plans for future performance. If it seems as if nothing is happening in our ministry, it is often because we fail to *plan*.
- 7. Time for the tasks to which God has called us.** There are, of course, countless duties which are expected of us as pastors, such as visiting hospitals and the home bound, preparing sermons and discussions, attending meetings, writing, preparing the bulletin, etc. Routine as these things may appear, they *are* essential.
- 8. Time to discern.** We often spend more time engaging in *activity* than we do in *ministry* -- and then we wonder why nothing seems to be happening in our pastorates. We need to reflect continually on *what* we're doing as well as on *how* we're doing. *Busy-ness* is often counterproductive. □

MAIL CALL

Dear Father Basil,

After some reflection, it seems to me that there are four areas where the DPLM could be of great value to parish clergy:

1. Clergy Compensation continues to be woefully inadequate, crippling parish life and ministry due to the need of clergy and their families to simply *survive*. It also undercuts recruitment and availability of clergy for today's and tomorrow's needs.

2. Pastoral Care for ailing or troubled clergy is unavailable (from what I can see, at least) in any coherent or organized way. Two examples: (1) Once I needed to get another priest specialized help. I tried contacting the DPLM, but never received a return call from anyone. (2) Sending troubled clergy to monasteries, or simply leaving them in place with 'help' provided by local clergy, doesn't resolve problems. The Roman Catholic Church has counseling centers for their troubled clergy which we could investigate using. Funding treatment costs money, but many clergy feel that, should they require attention, they will be abandoned by the Church.

3. Pastoral Training of the newly ordained needs to be improved. We have been ordained, only to be thrown out to 'sink or swim'. I have often suspected that the roots of later problems clergy have begin in the first year of ministry -- a time of immense "fear and trembling".

Since we do not have a huge number of new clergy each year, one way the DPLM could help would be to maintain regular contact with clergy through the early, difficult months.

4. Continuing Education is non-existent. If clergy have the funds to go to Saint Vladimir's Summer Institute, that's good. If they don't, or have a working wife, or work themselves, they might go years without having this valuable and necessary opportunity.

Two possibilities suggest themselves. (1) To have an on-going correspondence-type set of courses (or a regular newsletter?) to pass along details and information. (2) More radically, to have a regular clergy convocation every two years or so for three to five days, picking a topic or topics for discussion and training. (This is after the Antiochian example. They alternate having their Convention and a clergy conference every year.)

I don't know if any of the above areas can really be tackled by the DPLM in today's climate, but I do think that they are important for the DPLM to consider.

The OCA truly needs a vital DPLM!

Your brother in Christ,
Priest Michael Regan

The Pilgrim's Way

One Priest's Experience

Part I

Father John Scollard, D. Min., ACSW

I can remember when I was six years old, throwing a white towel around my tiny shoulders and playing Liturgy at my grandmother's dining room table. At the time I felt that I was both controlling something very powerful and yet being controlled by it.

On another occasion I can remember going to Church on Palm Sunday and receiving a palm from this huge man dressed in colorful robes. I don't remember the palm so much as the smile and wink I received from the priest.

It is perhaps these human experiences of Liturgy that act as divine "energy" in a sense and direct us, in part, toward seeking the priestly life.

And here I am now, forty seven years later, standing at a *real* altar in a *real* church, being the priest. I still feel that I'm trying to control something very powerful, but ultimately feel more controlled by Him whom I don't understand but love intensely. I hope the child in me never dies, because he keeps me in awe of this Sacred Mystery which God chooses to share with me.

The purpose of this article is not an expose of my childhood fantasies, but rather, one priest's experience of the Divine Liturgy. I'm using this format as a means to open dialogue among priests about the priesthood. I feel that if we are going to ask other priests to share their thoughts, then we had better be prepared to share *ours*. I chose Liturgy on the assumption that this is probably the most important and intimate

ritual we engage in as priests. It is a common denominator among all of us. While I have studied theology, I do not consider myself a theologian and I'm sure there are many of you out there who would contribute much more fully to the development of liturgics than this priest. So what I'm saying is that I do not pretend to develop a theology of Liturgy as much as recapitulate my own experience of Liturgy as celebrant.

In the second part of this series, I will get into the more specific aspects of Liturgy. But for now, I would simply like to share with you some general comments.

ence of Liturgy can break open my heart, even when I'm tired and dry. In the experience of Liturgy I experience Jesus Christ.

Without the Liturgy I'm not sure that I would "understand" God or even believe in Him. Without Liturgy I would have no way of opening up a dialogue with Him. What I'm saying here is that outside of prayer I don't think it is possible to meet God. Needless to say, there are many entry points for Liturgy, and the Liturgy does not end at the Liturgy. The grace of the Liturgy literally floods the universe and permeates every aspect of the material creation. All the pain that I experience as a priest somehow is transformed at Liturgy, and I find myself healed again. And yet I'm also wounded at Liturgy. I become so fully aware of my own sinfulness. It is a confrontation with the Divine Image of what

"All the pain that I experience as a priest somehow is transformed at Liturgy, and I find myself healed again."

The Divine Liturgy for me is important because it feeds my spirit, psyche and body. It guides me and keeps me from becoming uncentered. It is my most intimate encounter with God and indeed with myself. The experi-

God is and yes, what I am. Indeed, it is rather humbling.

So, my brothers, I will leave you at the entrance to the Holy Doors. In the next issue I will open those doors with the article, *The Liturgy as Journey*. □

D P L M

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Pastors speak out

Diocese of the West Survey

Father Basil Rhodes

It is always important to feel that the work that you are doing or perhaps are about to begin will be of some value to someone. Too often we seem to see the identification of some "problem" in the Church's life. Then some well-intentioned person in the higher levels of Church administration decides to throw a program at it or, better yet, an entire department. Now you have the "problem" and a new problem — the bureaucracy that is supposed to address the original problem. And then there were two.

When I was asked to serve on the newly reorganized Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry, I wanted to be sure that this was something that pastors thought could be useful to them.

I sent the questionnaire to 25 of the diocesan clergy of the Diocese of the West. This is nearly all of them. When I received 16 responses to my questionnaire, that in itself told me that interest was very high.

Below are the survey questions and responses.

QUESTION 1: *Do you see a need for having a Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry?*

Fifteen out of the 16 priests who responded said clearly that they see a need for this department. Hence, a mandate... at least from the Diocese of the West.

QUESTION 2: *If "Yes", what do you perceive the task of that department to be? (Please give a broad, generalized, single-sentence response.)*

Thirteen of those who responded see the Department's main task as one of being responsive in the areas of

- a.) parochial problems.
- b.) personal problems, including family problems, illness, alcohol/drug abuse, etc.
- c.) establishment of local clergy support/helps systems.
- d.) spiritual encouragement.
- e.) aid in dealing with money problems, continuing education, and training for the newly-ordained.
- f.) inter-clergy communication.

QUESTION 3: *Do you think that a*

confidential system of pastors helping pastors could be useful?

All responding said that a system of "pastors helping pastors" was very desirable. Confidentiality was a question that was raised by 4 respondents as an essential "must" for any helping system to really work.

QUESTION 4: *From where do you think the majority of clergy find their earthly support in times of trouble, need, or difficulty? Rank the following: Bishop, other priests, friends in parish, friends outside parish, doctor or therapist, family, spiritual father, monastery, spouse, themselves.*

The overwhelming majority see as their first line of support in times of trouble their wives. It is obvious that clergy wives share fully in the stresses of their husbands' calling.

QUESTION 5: *Do you think a newsletter discussing areas of concern is a good idea? If "yes", what format would you like to see it take?*

Fourteen out of 16 said that it would be a good idea, and a good forum for exchanging ideas and getting some valuable insights.

The overall tone of the responses was positive. But it is obvious that the priests, themselves, want to be involved in this Department which seeks to help them. Can it be any other way?

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